

Dera Natung Government College Research Journal**CONTENTS**

Sl. No.	Articles	Author	Pages
1.	Guidance and Counselling Needs in Capacity Building of Pre-Service Teacher Trainees	Alphonsa Diana Haokip	1
2.	Attitude of Elementary School Teachers Towards the Dyslexia Students in East Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh.	Beori Yabe	15
3.	Demographic Profile of the High-and Lower-Altitude Monpas in Arunachal Pradesh, India	Bhaboklang Sohkhlet Nich Menia	26
4.	Impact of Population Growth on Forest Cover: A Case Study of Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh	Gendan Tsering Gibji Nimasow Nandini Chakrabarthy Singh	39
5.	Birth Rituals and Associated Taboos among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh	Landi Pussang Monia	53
6.	Pluralism and Identity Politics: A Look into the Indian Centre-State Scenario	Dr. Nandini Basistha	63
7.	Shifting Cultivation in North-East India: Growth and Progress	Dr. B.K. Panda Dr. Sukanta Sarkar	69
8.	Economic Empowerment of Women through NGO: A Case Study	Mriganka Saikia Pankaj Saikia	91
9.	Why India is Shying Away from Its Frontiers?	Dr. Ratna Tayeng	101
10.	US-Nepal and India: Trilateral Relations on Global and Regional Strategic Perspective	Vijay Jayshwal	109

US-Nepal and India: Trilateral Relations on Global and Regional Strategic Perspective

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Abstract

In the first section of paper, author has tried to clarify the indispensable and indivisible history of foreign policy of India with Nepal. Although Nepal's foreign policy was always measured with comparing with our neighbouring nation as like Sino-Nepal relations will have the four basic characteristics with 'c' – cooperation, competition, confrontation and conflict. The concept of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) must be recognized and furnished by the foreign policy of Nepal. India is our strategic partner since time immemorial. Nepal's foreign policy is always been guided by the foreign policy of India and we shall see some similarities between these two countries foreign policy. India is revising their regional policy nowadays. They are also reviewing their regional involvement since 1947. A recent report says that "Non Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century", a future policy of India must be centred on three "core objectives": "To ensure that India did not define its national interest or approach to world politics in terms of ideologies and goals that had been set elsewhere; that India retained maximum strategic autonomy to pursue its development goals; and that India worked to build national power as the foundation for creating a just and equitable world order.

The second section of paper will illustrate the West eyes on East and our non-parallel rate of economic growth and benefit of Nepal from India's growth. In the U.S.A. strategic guidance released in January 2012 has said that USA has shifted its strategic interest and priorities from the Atlantic to the Pacific, including the East and South

Asia where these two giants are being situated. "U.S economic and security interest are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, while the US military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia- Pacific region" India is reformulating her bilateral ties with US and also ties with China to walk in line with changing scenario of world politics. We are secured in the sense that US have never shown her interest in Nepalese soil directly but have been played with Indian card. Nepal also needs to reformulate its bilateral ties with US independently keeping our strong relation with India.

The last section of paper will reconsider the possibility of Nepal's further development and presence in some of Forums where India is taking lead. Such as, in SAARC, Indian diplomat J.N. Dixit has written that "time has come for the SAARC not shy away from becoming a forum for discussion on political issues which afflict then countries in the region" This forum shouldn't limit to trade and co-operation in this regional level but must be favourable platform to discuss each country internal political conflicts.

Keywords : *Hard Powers, Diplomatic Deficit, Chindia, Foreign Policy, NAM.*

Strategic Position of Nepal in International Relation

The existence of Nepal had been recognized even before the international boundaries had been fully and finally established. Mention of Nepal is found in the ancient history of both China and India. Nepal-China boundary is as old as the history of the two countries, but in contrast to the very ancient cultural, social, political and economic relations, Nepal-India boundary has a comparatively recent origin and its present boundary demarcation and delimitation took place after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16 which was ended with signing of Treaty with The British East India Company who prepared a draft of the treaty with the signature of Lieutenant Colonel Paris Bradshaw on December 2, 1815 (Shrestha, 2000).

Nepal's King Prithvi Narayan Shah's famous 'Yam between two boulders' quote reflects the great understanding of Nepal's security dilemma, even as far back as the 18th century (Chaturvedy & Malone, 2012). Its geo-political position is becoming central point of concentration of Asian relation. Nepal has seen the repercussion when India and China were far with each other in the War of 1962 A.D. There is dilemma among the intellectual that what will be the impact on Nepal if China and India come closer with each other. Ultimately, as argued by Manish Dabhade and Harsh V. Pant, both countries have increased their interference in Nepal, while severely undermining 'Nepal's sovereignty and its ability to cope' with these regional giants effectively (Dabhade & Pant, 2004). Nepal is bordered to the North by China and to the South, East and West by India. On the North side, Nepal has a 1400 km border with China while and on the East, West and South, Nepal has 1700 km border with India. The two neighbour's quest of becoming superpowers in the next 20 to 30 years and incredible economic rise have compelled Nepal to rethink its foreign policy basically regional policy from traditional buffer state mindset towards becoming a vibrant bridge between them (National Planning Commission and Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Nepal has to develop its regional policy in such a way where three governments from these three countries can sit and discuss together on equal footing about the development of Nepal. They are today concerning about the Trans-Himalaya Security and Economic Cooperation (Rivals, 2008) where Nepal should stand clearly. It is also compelling us for revision of our regional policy.

Countries size has nothing to do with the sound Foreign policy. It is traditionally perceived that Nepal is smaller in size which is hindrance for institutionalizing its foreign policy. Nepal is not a smaller country - there are more than 100 nations which are smaller than Nepal in size while it ranks 40th among 90 nations in population. We need to develop wholesome attitude while chalking out our foreign policy. Trade, aid and developmental issues have a direct bearing in the formulation of Nepal's foreign policy. We have to hone our diplomatic skills (communicating and negotiating capabilities) to effectively implement foreign policy. The foreign policy is objective phenomenon than the subjective one which means the result gives sound

element of foreign policy. Defining foreign policy doesn't work anymore. Another essential element to know about the Foreign policy of any countries is to know about the diplomacy used by them. Nepal since its recognition in the international world is using Track 1 diplomacy in which the State was actively involved. It is time to Promote Track-2 diplomacy, and also the third version of diplomacy Track 1.5 – meaning involvement of both government and private sectors jointly in dealing with foreign governments. Our foreign policy was always measured with compare with our neighbouring nation as like Sino-Nepal relations will have the four basic characteristics with 'c' – cooperation, competition, confrontation, and conflict.

The concept of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) must be recognized and furnished by the foreign policy of Nepal. The geographical position of Nepal reveals important strategic concern over the two-rising economic of the world. Nepal was made landlocked countries through the Treaty of Sugauli concluded between the then British Empire and with Nepalese governing bodies. The British got the facilities of corridor in the east and in the west; also, it got all the facilities and benefits. No provision of facility and concession was made for Nepal. India and the United States of America are coming closer due to shared belief in democracy, trade potential, geo-political interests and desire to prevent terrorism (Lal, 2011). United States is shifting its agenda from African states to Asian due to continuous raise of economic. Good relation exists between China and the United States largely because of economic reasons. India and China are also improving their bilateral relations on economic, security and border issues; including on removal of supposed irritants such as Tibet and Sikkim. The US naturally has an interest in containing China as an emerging military and nuclear power through improved relations with India while maintaining booming trade and investment with China (Shah, 2011). There seem to be a global and regional desire among the nuclear giants to avoid the emergence of a failed state and a desire for stable Nepal.

Indo-US and Nepal: Pyramidal Relations

The international relations are guided by some of the principles such as Foreign Policy of Countries, diplomatic agreement, bilateral ties and mutual trust to each other.

Today's condition is not the condition of cold war anymore which made distant with US for India. Development of good relations with all major powers without being constrained by Cold War-era thinking of blocs and alliances adds to our ability to pursue our independent path as dictated by our national interest. The aim of our Foreign Policy is to create conditions where we can focus on the economic development in the regional and global level. Despite being one of the pioneers and founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement of 1961, India developed a closer relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. India is constitutionally declared Socialist Democratic Republic Country which has dragged near to then communist blocks. This was the first instances when US was not actively allowed in the Asia to establish her power prevalence's in this region. India began to review its foreign policy aftermath fall of Soviet Union in a unipolar world, and took steps to develop closer ties with the European Union and the United States. Current Indian foreign policy is based on maintaining strategic autonomy to promote and safeguard national interests.

The rapid growth of India's economy which compel West to change their strategic relation from Pan African Countries to Asia which has expanded unparallel relation in bilateral trade, the close links between the Indian and American computer and Internet industries, a geopolitical coalition to balance the rise of an increasingly assertive China, the weakening of US-Pakistan relations over various ongoing disputes, and the 2008 reversal of long-standing American opposition to India's nuclear program. Today, India and the US share an extensive cultural, strategic, military, and economic relationship. China as transforming herself as liberal communist is threatening the US hegemony in the world. The monistic political power of US is slowly decreasing in Asian region due to rise of Chinese potential growth which is alarming the conventional ideas of power relation around the world. There are series of agreement with India to decline the presence of China in this region.

India's emergence as a rising world power and a mature market economy are significant to the region and the world. China as one of the world's two indispensable emerging market along with India. India's sprawling economy has shown itself capable of

growing as rapidly as China's; in 2006 and 2007, Indian GDP surged 8.5 %. In 2012, according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), India likely eclipsed Japan as the world's third largest economy (Chandler & Zainulbhai, 2013). This commendable growth has changed the position of India in minds of US people. The Americans are feeling more favourably toward several of the United States' major allies in 2012 than they have in the past. This year's ratings for Canada (96%), Australia (93%), Germany (86%), Japan (83%), and India (75%) are all record highs for those countries in Gallup trends that stretch back at least a decade. Additionally, the survey finds Great Britain (90%), France (75%), and Israel (71%) rated near their all-time highs. According to Gallup's annual public opinion polls, India is perceived by Americans as their 6th favourite nation in the world, with 75% of Americans viewing India favourably in 2012, though this declined somewhat to 72% in 2014.

Until the 1980's, US and India were strategically hostile; Indian elites had come to regard America as part of an encircling ring crafted to "keep it down" and Americans regarded India's nonalignment as phony at best (Cohen, 2013). Today US is major strategic partner of India. History will attest to the fact that great national partnerships and alliances in the modern world thrive when all elements of government, corporate and civil societies are engaged. History is also likely to record that the 21st century will mark the rise of India as a global power. The United States looks forward to working closely with India both to develop our bilateral relations but also to cooperate to enhance the forces of world integration such as trade, communications and transport while combating the pernicious forces of disintegration such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. India strategic goals are basically to enable the domestic transformation of India by accelerated growth and a strategic autonomy that safeguards the national interest at all times in this overall global context.

India's foreign policy has always regarded the concept of neighbourhood as one of widening concentric circles, around a central axis of historical and cultural commonalities. Nepal is natural and geopolitical allies with India all the time. The Independence

of Nepal is being recognized by India through time and again.

There was doubt in the International Community about the independent status and sovereignty of Nepal which we encountered in 1953's when we apply for the member of UN. Some countries made reservation to us for not granting the membership of UN in early. Regional diplomacy and engagement of Nepal in the regional level has started in post 1953's. The presence of Nepal was welcomed by India and USA too. But its importance has been increasing due to a number of significant factors, including the changing nature of international relations such as shifting balance of power towards the developing countries and regional blocs, rise of regional economic grouping and trading blocs and increasing interdependence and economic integration of states. Nepal started having Nepal started receiving bilateral aid in the 1950's and 60's initially from USA and India and then UK in the form of Colombo Plan. They were later joint by USSR and China. Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan became important donor in the second wave. Grants and technical assistance were the major form of aid.

India is Nepal's strategic partner since time immorial. There is transformation of soft power with India and Nepal. Nepal's foreign policy is always been guided by the foreign policy of India and we shall see some similarities between these two countries foreign policy. India is revising their regional policy nowadays. They are also reviewing their regional involvement since 1947. A recent report says that "Non Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century", a future policy of India must be centred on three "core objectives": "To ensure that India did not define its national interest or approach to world politics in terms of ideologies and goals that had been set elsewhere; that India retained maximum strategic autonomy to pursue its development goals; and that India worked to build national power as the foundation for creating a just and equitable world order."

In South Asia, India has been driven by the vision of encouraging regional integration to bring about peace and prosperity for the more than one and a half billion people living in this region. As part of this vision, this geography of hope, we have been

implementing a policy of asymmetric engagement in providing greater market access to our neighbours, which enables regional integration in a mutually beneficial manner. Nepal's needs to review its regional policy with India since 1950's and should give clear stand on it. Nepal shouldn't act herself as puppet or platform for the Indian foreign policy. India and China are becoming close to each other which is being time and time proven by their increasing trade volume, their soft power and their hard power. Nepal needs to identify its soft power because the hard power will not make any sense to these two countries. Nepal's can't challenge the military and economic strength of these two nations. Nepal's must develop attractive soft power as key of regional foreign policy. Nepal has always been upholding 'One China' policy and is committed not to allow Nepalese territory to be used against our friendly neighbour China's core interests.

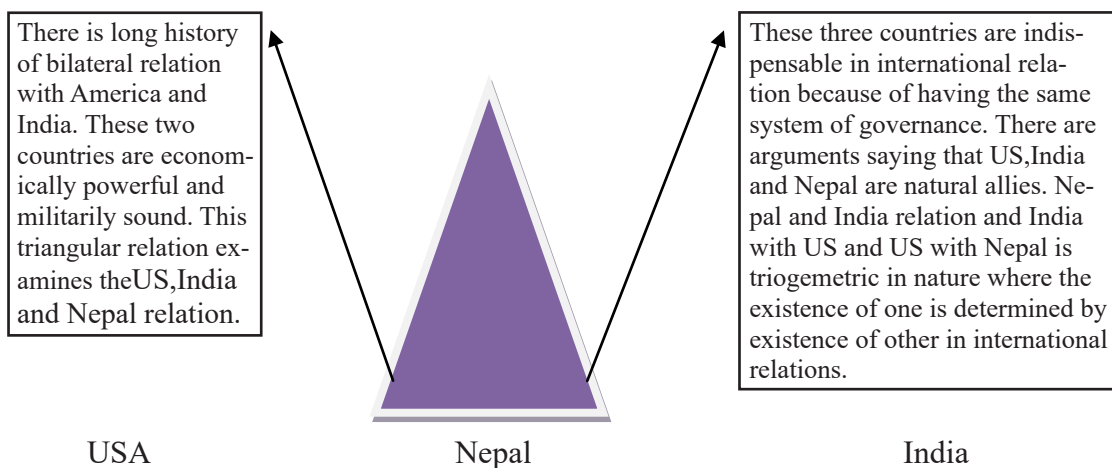


Fig. 1: Triangular Relations of US, India, and Nepal.

Nepal's Benefit with Indo-US Bond

India status as a 'rising power' had led it to reorient and reformulate its relations with global powers. This has been particularly so since the end of Cold War and disintegration of Soviet Union which continued to be the most important strategic partner of India since the signing of the Bilateral treaty in 1971 till its collapse in 1991 (Chakrabarti, 2012). India's economic growth has also been part of the success story in enhancing India's global reach. This target of Asian tiger is being assisted by the US through series of Agreement ranging from Military Assistance to Cultural exchange. Nepal is being

always benefited because in word of Honorary Excellency Narendra Modi, “India is Nepal open country not locked” which says our closer relation with India. Indian foreign policy never disfavours the neighbour and Nepal are strongest allies with India where our substantial percentage of trade are with India which have contributed to growth their GDP.

There are four regional organizations or initiatives where Nepal is party and India has taken lead: the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral-Economic Cooperation, the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation and the Mekong Ganga Cooperation Initiative. China, as another immediate neighbour, is a key priority of India’s foreign policy. Nepal is bordered to the North by China and to the South, East and West by India. On the North side, Nepal has a 1400 km border with China while and on the East, West and South, Nepal has 1700 km border with India. The two neighbour’s quest of becoming super-powers in the nest 20 to 30 years and incredible economic rise have compelled Nepal to rethink its foreign policy basically regional policy from traditional buffer state mindset towards becoming a vibrant bridge between them.

India has attempted to establish a strategic and cooperative partnership with China. It has emerged as the largest trading partner of India, and India’s engagement is now multi-faceted. The maintenance of peace and tranquillity on borders with China, and the quest for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the outstanding boundary question, are areas of crucial importance in India’s bilateral relationship with China. India have specific policy called ‘Look East’ Policy, which have tried to reconnect and reach out in the civilization space share with near neighbours’ in Southeast Asia since the early 1990s. India is building strong bilateral ties, expanding their roles in regional organizations and working to build comprehensive economic partnerships.

India have tried to build mutually beneficial ties with all the major powers, foremost among which is the United States. The relationship with the United States is in

fact built on shared values and converging interests. It is based on fundamental belief that both have mutually beneficial stakes in each other's success. India have in the last decade, set up a comprehensive architecture of engagement based on broad political support in each of countries, strong people to people linkages, and a growing habit of cooperation. Over the past ten years, the two governments have put in place a very robust agenda of cooperation for our partnership that is, to quote former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, founded on both "principles and pragmatism. The United States will continue to make the necessary investments to ensure that we maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely in keeping with our treaty obligations and with international law. Working closely with our network of allies and partners, we will continue to promote a rules-based international order that ensures underlying stability and encourages the peaceful rise of new powers, economic dynamism, and constructive defence cooperation (Dixit, 2001).

Critics also argue the Indian hegemony in the regional level which has expressed tension of rivalry with Pakistan and excessive increase of Military expenditure. The 20th century had witnessed that the regional space is becoming increasingly essential for the power transition and projection. It is be serious threat to global rising power like India if she fails to maintain amicable relation with regional players through positive transformation in the zone, growth and peace. This makes it relevant to properly analyse the impact of Indian policy in SA region (Rajagopalan & Sahni, 2008). US have also given concentration to make good relation with other countries of Asia which is under continuous support of India. Nepal receives some % of aid in various sectors from US government which includes in education, health, infrastructure and others. Indo-US bond will provide more similar opportunity for Nepal. China has started showing its interest in Nepal due to Tibet uprising and their movement.

India's major economic initiatives are mainly directed through the, "Look East Policy" which seeks to expand India's link with the countries located in Southeast Asia and East Asia along with her burgeoning influence in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean

zones. Joint economic initiatives involving South Asian countries like the South Asian Sub-regional grouping, the Kunming Initiative, the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) Economic Cooperation, the IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation) are mostly attempts to create extra-regional economic linkages between SA and SEA and East Asian countries. India is also showing her serious concern about the Human Security equally to the economic cooperation with regional blocks. There are growing regional conflict such as, Pakistan Vs India over Kashmir issues, China and India over border issues and others. India is in search of alternative security pact with joint venture of all regional players. Recent attempt to project an alternative security problematic in Southeast Asia through regional consensus building efforts to 'Asianise' the paradigm of human security is order to make it more appropriate for regional application, could perhaps be emulated in South Asia in this regard (Sucharithanarugse, 2000). Nepal can play its important role for figuring the no harm from Nepal sides to India which is our one pillar of foreign policy since 1947.

The regional involvement of India along with the cooperation of US shall benefit all the countries situated in this land. The year 2008 had witnessed positive symbol for the Asian countries which can strengthen our regional relations. In 2008, February, Pakistan adopted civilian rule through denouncing long military dictatorship, Bhutan constitutionally established democratic government, and Nepal successfully adopted the Constituent Assembly after ten years of insurgency and long political turmoil and Maldives ushered in multi-party democracy (Ganguly, 2010). This ray of hope reflects the numerous possibilities of this region to stand together for each other causes and development. Asian regional is culturally rich, naturally beautiful, economically growing, and militarily sound and there are many more hidden treasures in this region. India is leading this region towards progress and development. Indian policy makers need to spell out a new vision of a global order barring a vague preference for multipolarity (Kumar, 2008). The regionalism in the international power always assists for the accumulation of global power. The US is well versed with the idea of making strong regional

alliance in order to keep her global hegemony in rest of the world. India has adopted the same model where Indian presence in the Asian regional hemisphere has contributed for the development of her presence.

The colonization period of India was also concerned with the friendly relation with the neighbours. The British Raj and independent India in their geographic neighbourhood, Martin Wainwright pointed to the huge continuities across the great chasm of decolonization that separated them. “Although the two regimes differed markedly in their constitutional basis of power, their ethnic composition, and their long-term goals, the attitudes of their members toward South Asian security were remarkably similar” (Wainwright, 1995). India and USA are well aware about the relationship of each other in order to global suppression of terrorism which is mostly seen in the Asian region. The incidence of 9/11, 7/11 and 11/11 had brought these two countries near to fight against global war to eliminate virus of terrorism from the region. Nepal is also duly victimized by the act of terrors because India always accused Nepal being transit point for the terrorist to enter into Indian soil. The triangular relationship with USA, India and Nepal must be strengthened in upcoming days.

Conclusion

Nepal is strategically situated in such region where there is equal possibility of “confrontation and peace” with rising global economy of the world in upcoming future which we have seen in 1962 A.D. We till time are successful to maintain equidistance with these two countries. China in North side is growing tremendously which is challenging the US hegemony in this region. China and India are coming closer in various sector and Nepal is between these two giants of world who have targeted to expand their trade of 20 billion \$ by end of 2020. The cheapest and reliable trade route for their trade is via the land of Nepal which covers 300 KM with maximum of three-hour driving. This example sets the possible percentage of economical support to Nepal if our government maintains the same level of trust and relation with these two countries. US are trying to minimize the influence of China in India while India is eager to expand her relation with China although they principally differ in governance. Their political

differences are becoming the minor issues and inferior over the economic cooperation between two “Asian Tiger” of world.

The political turbulence is pulling leg of our economic development agendas and growth. The stagnant economic growth and rising political distrust is hampering the national economy of country. Nepal is not being able to achieve the substantial percentage of benefit from these two countries bilateral trade. Nepal always favours the principle of five restraints which is guiding doctrine to maintain our any foreign relation in the regional and global level. The Indo-US strong ties in economic and military shall benefit Nepal through our distinctive bilateral relation with India. Nepal has recently concluded BIPPA with Indian side which is a ray of hope in coming future in areas of development. The US-India partnership also shall invite FDI in Nepal because our 65 % trades are with India and Nepal will be potential market for Indian based industries.

Hence, the Nepal’s perspective to Indo-US relation is very straightforward which says strong US-India relation will enhance strong Nepal, India and US bilateral and multilateral development. There is need to reformulate our regional policies with all considerations.

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